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Mural Decoration

BLASHFIELD'S "STRAINS OF GREY."

By SADAKICHI HARTMANN.

"**S**TRAINS OF GREY," by E. H. Blashfield, depicting a laurel-wreathed, youthful figure holding a large ancient string instrument in its hands, is, for its simple composition, the naive pose of the figure, the revery expressed in the face, and its soft, subdued tone of delicious greys, perhaps the most satisfactory work the artist has accomplished within the last few years. Blashfield's mature, intellectual and dignified talent has probably reached in his "Angel with the Fiery Sword" the height of his always decoratively inclined picture painting. His pictures generally look too much labored, more the work of a scholar than of a genius. His principal strength lies in decorative painting, in which his drawing is as elegant as his color fragile in tone. There are but two or three Americans, if there are any who can rival him in the grand style of fresco painting. Lately there has been a decided increase of interest in this branch of art, which is due not a little to the efforts of E. H. Blashfield. All who have any doubt of the movement of educating our people by mural decorations of high quality in public buildings should read Blashfield's "Plea for Municipal Art." It is beautiful in language, scholarly in knowledge, sincere in its purpose and invigorating in its effect, one of the best lectures on art ever given in this country. Indeed, it makes Blashfield the father of municipal art in this country.

A DECORATIVE SUGGESTION.

TO the lover of figure decorations, especially of the ecclesiastical order, the design on this page presents a refined, simple and broadly decorative effect, which offers many possibilities, either as mural decoration or for stained-glass purposes. The human figure is the highest and noblest of all elements with which the decorator has to deal, and is at the same time the most difficult to treat. In spite of this difficulty, however, we recognize the fact that the interest given by the human figure to any decorative scheme surpasses that imparted by any other elements, be they what they may.

Parallel with the interest which it excites is the refining influence which it exerts over the elements associated with it. The study of the human form is of such a nature that it is impossible to pursue it without benefitting the lower elements of ornament and raising their general character. In proof of this examine a good piece of Italian or Gothic foliage, and compare it with the best obtainable foliage of Asiatic art; it will be seen at once how tame the latter is by the side of the living creation of the styles first mentioned, in which the study of the figure is so greatly fostered. Nor is this to be wondered at, for subtlety of line, composition of mass, proportion and balance of parts are so perfectly illustrated in the human form that it seems as if Nature had concentrated all her wealth in this one supreme creation, which presents an epitome of the qualities essential to ornamental art.



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